



For Immediate Release

November 30, 2007

Holidays most common time for candle fires

Four of the five top days for fires caused by candles in the home are during the holidays, according to the National Fire Protection Association, and December is the most common time for home candle fires.

The top days are Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and Halloween.

"Candles are used more often over the holidays than at any other time of year," said Michael S. Garvey, chief deputy of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Fire and Building Safety Division. "And with added flammables of live and artificial Christmas trees and holiday decorations, we're urging extra caution. The holidays should be memorable because of interaction with family and friends, not from a holiday tragedy."

The IDHS has five divisions, one of which is Fire and Building Safety. As one of its many duties, the division gathers information about fires and fire prevention.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, in 2005, the most recent year for which statistics are available, an estimated 15,600 home structure fires were started by candles. These fires resulted in an estimated 150 deaths, 1,270 injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$539 million. Homes include dwellings, duplexes, manufactured housing and apartments.

Here are some suggestions for candle safety:

- Never leave candles unattended.
- Extinguish candles before leaving a room, leaving your home or going to sleep. Falling asleep was a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 26% of associated deaths, according to the NFPA.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, including decorations, paper, wreaths and bows.
- Keep all candles, matches and lighters out of reach of children and pets.
- Make sure lit candles are not in places where they can be accidentally knocked over.
- Use sturdy, non-flammable candle holders that will collect dripping wax.
- Trim wicks to ½ inch. Long or crooked wicks cause uneven burning and dripping.
- Don't use candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.
- Don't use candles as a decoration on a Christmas tree.

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- Use a flashlight, not a candle, for emergency lighting.
- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles.
- Extinguish candles when they burn down to within two inches of their holder or decorations.
- To avoid hot wax spatter, blow out a candle by holding your finger in front of the flame and blow at it. The air will flow around your finger and extinguish the candle from both sides, preventing spatter.

In 2005, the State of Indiana consolidated all of its emergency management and homeland security efforts into one department by creating the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS). The five divisions of IDHS are Emergency Response, Fire & Building Safety; the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center; Planning and Assessment; Preparedness and Training; and Support Services. These divisions intertwine to accomplish the central mission of IDHS: safeguarding the lives and property of the citizens of Indiana.

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